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ABSTRACT

This brochure describes the work of the Regional English Language Centre (RELC), located in Singapore and established by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO); Indonesia, Khmer Republic, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam are the member countries. The fundamental purpose of the Centre is the improvement of standards of teaching English as a second or foreign language in the member countries. The Centre operates in response to regional needs as identified by member countries, and its general approach is problem-oriented. This document outlines the work of the Centre in areas of teacher training, research, instructional materials development, library and information work, publications, and activities to promote regional cooperation. (VM)

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SOUTHEAST ASIAN MINISTERS OF EDUCATION ORGANIZATION

REGIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE, SINGAPORE

Programme of Activities, 1972-1976

The Regional English Language Centre (RELC) is an educational project of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and is located in Singapore. It was conceived in November, 1966 at the second historic conference in Manila of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education. The concept was developed with remarkable rapidity and the Centre has been operating since July, 1968 from temporary premises provided by the Government of Singapore at 130, Watten Estate Road, Singapore. In May, 1972, the Centre moved to its permanent home, an 18-storey building at 30, Orange Grove Road, Singapore 10.

The Regional English Language Centre has as its fundamental aim the improvement of standards of teaching English as a second or foreign language in the eight SEAMEO countries, namely, Indonesia, Khmer Republic, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. It attempts to achieve this aim by supporting and strengthening national efforts in the field of English language teaching and by pioneering new approaches. The Centre operates in response to regional needs as identified by member countries themselves and its general approach is problem-orientated.

The Centre is administered by a Director under the overall policy direction of the Governing Board, which is composed of one representative from each participating country appointed by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Council (SEAMEC) on the recommendation of the Minister of Education of his own country.

I. Training

RELC conducts four training courses annually. The courses are as follows:

A. FOUR-MONTH INTENSIVE COURSE (two a year) leading to the award of the Certificate in the Teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language.

Aim of the course:

The course is problem-orientated to meet some of the specific and immediate needs of member countries. It gives training to key personnel and potential key personnel in theory, content and techniques of teaching English as a second or foreign language,

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with emphasis on practical applications. The course is primarily designed for those members of the education service who will be in a position, on their return, to influence English teaching methods and materials or to stimulate the raising of English teaching standards in their countries. Examples of this category of persons are university and teacher training college lecturers, supervisors/ inspectors, curriculum materials specialists, research designers and educational administrators.

Scope of course:

The course consists of lectures, discussions, tutorials, seminars and practical sessions on:

(a) Phonology (theoretical and applied), general linguistics, the structure of English, methodology of language teaching, language testing, psychology of second language learning, preparation and evaluation of instructional materials, study of syllabuses, construction and utilization of audio-visual aids, language laboratory techniques and other areas of TESL/TEFL (approximately 300 hours).

(b) A specific assignment for intensive study with the assistance of special tutorial and other facilities available at the Centre (approximately 100 hours). The assignment may be academic in nature or it may be a practical investigation in an area of particular interest to the country from which the course member comes.

B. ONE-YEAR COURSE leading to the award of the Diploma in the Teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language.

Aim of course:

The objectives of the Diploma Course are broader than those of the Four-Month Intensive Course so that the differing demands of the member countries may be satisfied. Participants in this course are, as far as feasible, offered an individually-tailored programme of instruction. The course structure is as flexible and offers the choice as to whether the emphasis is to be on more formal instruction or on individual project work.

Scope of course:

The formal course content is broadly similar to that of TESL/TEFL courses held in universities in English-speaking countries for foreign students but with central emphasis placed on the problems of the Southeast Asian region.

C. THREE-MONTH SPECIALIZED ADVANCED COURSE (one a year) leading to the award of the Specialized Advanced Certificate in the Teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language.

Aim of course:

The objectives of the Three-Month Course are to enable higher management level personnel, both professional and administrative, concerned with policies and development in the area of English language teaching to study in depth one particular topic or subject of special interest to member countries.

Scope of course:

The structure and content of each Three-Month Course is determined largely by the topic to be dealt with.

II. Research

Among the functions of the Centre are (a) the conducting and promotion of research and the dissemination of the results of research in TESL/TEFL and related fields; and (b) the provision of professional and administrative support to research scholars from both within and outside the region.

It is recognized that continuous enquiry into and evaluation of current theory, methodology and content are necessary to ensure that the research projects remain in harmony with the problems and needs of the region. A primary orientation of the Centre's research activity, therefore, is to encourage creativity directed to the development of new approaches to English language instruction appropriate to Southeast Asia. It is hoped to establish the reputation of the Centre as an outstanding institution for creativity and innovation in the field of language teaching and learning.

RELC research personnel are as follows:

(a) RELC staff

The programmes of the Centre during the coming years will continue to include a strong training component. Part of the function of the Centre staff, however, is to stimulate, initiate and participate in research projects of practical value to member countries.

(b) Participants in RELC courses

Many assignments completed during training courses by RELC course members constitute research projects, as may be seen from a perusal of the list of titles of assignments completed to date. This activity on the part of participants in RELC courses is to be continued and expanded.

(c) RELC Research Fellows

RELC awards a limited number of Research Fellowships each year to make it possible for a few researchers from SEAMEO countries to carry out projects at RELC.

Applications for Research Fellowships are considered by RELC in the light of such priorities as may be established, and of funds available, but especially in the light of the probable value of the project for the improvement of English teaching in a SEAMEO member country or in the SEAMEO region. These awards are made for projects of considerable scope, and to persons clearly qualified to carry out the projects proposed. The duration of the project may vary according to the nature of the research. Funds allocated for the Fellowship may cover all costs of the project including travel and subsistence, or only such costs as cannot be met from other sources.

Research Fellows at RELC have available to them all the resources of the Centre, including consultant and advisory services of the RELC professional staff.

(d) RELC Research Grantees

As part of its function to promote research relevant to problems in English teaching in the SEAMEO region, RELC may make Research Grants available to scholars in member countries. Such grants may be awarded in support of research projects consistent with RELC objectives in research.

The general purpose of such Research Grants is supplementary, i.e. their primary purpose is to provide funds required to bring a research project, or a specific stage of a research project, to a conclusion when other sources of support are not available. Thus, total support of long-term projects is not envisaged nor can funds for subsistence and similar expenditures be provided under this heading.

Applications for Research Grants should be for the support of projects that are in a fairly advanced state of development, so that the funds requested will be for specific, clearly-defined purposes, over a short term. Persons eligible to receive RELC Research Grants include qualified nationals of SEAMEO member countries and RELC professional staff. Funds are not available to support research projects which are being carried out in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an academic qualification.

(e) RELC Research Scholars

As part of its research function, RELC expects to provide at the Centre an attractive locale offering facilities for research, and to be in a position to make these facilities available to researchers. The funds to support such scholars derive from sources other than RELC.

The facilities and resources that RELC can put at the disposal of researchers are its library and information service, office space and equipment, and the opportunity of consultation with the RELC professional staff. If the research requires contacts in the SEAMEO region (e.g. for materials tryouts, observation visits, etc.), RELC can also provide information and assistance in arranging such contacts.

Research Scholar facilities may be granted to qualified persons from both within and outside the SEAMEO region, whose research topics are considered

be RELC to be beneficial to the SEAMEO region, and likely to be of significance in furthering the development of English teaching in the region.

The Director of the Centre reserves the right to determine the form of support that may be given to such scholars once their bona fides are established. Such support excludes any form of financial aid.

III. Instructional Materials Development

In the field of Instructional Materials Development, the Centre (a) collects samples of and information on instructional materials which are used in the region; (b) stimulates and assists the production of appropriate instructional materials at a national as well as a regional level; and (c) produces instructional materials which effectively satisfy particular needs in the region.

IV. Library and Information Centre

The RELC Library and Information Centre is an indispensable component of the Regional English Language Centre and a vital support to its training and research activities. It will continue to be a major source of information on TESL/TEFL, descriptive, theoretical and applied linguistics and language education.

The Library and Information Centre acts as a clearing-house of information at all levels of TESL/TEFL. It collects all relevant materials on TESL/TEFL from a wide variety of sources both within and outside the region and disseminates items of information that are contained in its holdings or generated through teaching and research at RELC which might be of benefit to the teacher, the learner, the research worker or the educational planner or administrator in the SEAMEO region. It promotes the exchange of information among specialists in linguistics and TESL/TEFL.

The Library and Information Centre serves all who have genuine need of its services. It is currently in the process of compiling a Research Register containing information on research projects in the SEAMEO region, directories of personnel and institutions in SEAMEO countries conducting TESL/TEFL and/or linguistic programmes and research, and of professional associations of TESL/TEFL in SEAMEO member countries as well as abstracts, indexes and specialized bibliographies.

V. Publications

The RELC publications are of two general types: information publications and professional publications.

(a) Information publications:

(i) Reports of Governing Board meetings and regional seminars;

(ii) Information brochures about the Centre;

(iii) Newsletter (quarterly);

(iv) Annual Reports; and

(v) Library publications.

(b) Professional publications:

(i) Periodical for teachers, teacher educators, scholars and administrators (RELC Journal);

(ii) Proceedings of important seminars;

(iii) Monographs or research papers on specialized topics; and

(iv) Instructional materials for (a) teachers and (b) learners of English.

VI. Activities to Promote Regional Cooperation

The Centre promotes regional cooperation in English language teaching matters through the following means:

(a) Regional conferences and seminars:

RELC regional conferences and seminars occupy an important place in its programme, and have as their aim the bringing together the English teaching specialists in member countries for cooperative effort towards finding solutions to current problems.

(b) Exchange of personnel:

As part of its endeavour to improve the standards of teaching and learning English in Southeast Asian region through regional cooperation, RELC includes among its functions that of arranging and supporting the exchange of personnel among institutions, agencies and projects in the SEAMEO member countries.

(c) Consultant and advisory services to national programmes:

Among the functions of RELC is the provision of consultant and advisory services to assist and strengthen the programmes and facilities in English teaching in member countries. RELC functions as a resource centre for English teaching efforts in the SEAMEO region, and one of its principal resources is the experience and expertise of its professional staff.

Requests for advisory or consultant services of the RELC staff should normally be made through the Ministry of Education of the respective SEAMEO member country.

(d) Exchange of instructional materials:

The Information Centre undertakes to provide all necessary information concerning instructional materials and their sources, to suggest appropriate exchanges and to facilitate the acquisition of the materials. However, actual exchanges of materials have to be arranged by the parties concerned.

(FURTHER INFORMATION ON RELC PROGRAMMES AND FACILITIES MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE REGISTRAR, REGIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE, 30 ORANGE GROVE ROAD, SINGAPORE 10.)

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